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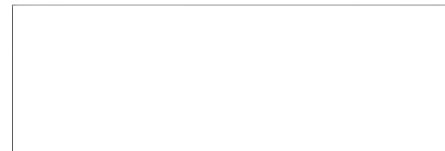
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Guatemala: No End to Violence?



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
29 July 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Guatemala: No End to Violence?

Summary

President Arana's first year in office, especially since he imposed the continuing state of siege last November, has been marked by a no-holds-barred campaign against Guatemala's decade-old insurgency. The extension of the security operations to include collaborators, leftists, and miscellaneous trouble-makers has affected a significant portion of the very small group in Guatemala that participates in the national life.

The guerrilla-terrorist organizations have taken serious losses and have managed to maintain only a low level of activity over the past several months. In the past, the terrorists' most notorious and daring acts, including the murders in 1968 of the US ambassador and two US officers in the military mission, have occurred when the insurgents were feeling the pinch of security operations. The terrorists may believe that the time is again ripe for a spectacular act that would retaliate for their losses and symbolize their continuing "revolution."

The high incidence of violence attending the effort against the insurgents, particularly the inclusion among the victims of a few very prominent

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persons (a congressional deputy, a labor leader, several university professors and journalists), is adversely affecting the prospects for political stability. The progressive hardening of attitudes may have removed all chance for eventual accommodation between the left and the right. As the opposition's grievances against the incumbent government grow, it is increasingly unlikely that those now in power would risk the accession of the leftists.

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Introduction

1. Violence and polarization are continuing in Guatemala in spite of hopes that the unprecedented transition from one government to another in elections last year might presage institutional stability and new opportunities for sociopolitical development. Within the generally poor, illiterate, and backward society, only a small segment consciously shares in the national life, and that group is torn by civil strife unrelieved by any sign of compromise. Indeed, the refusal of Guatemalan politicians to seek a mutual accommodation is so ingrained that virtually all doors to dialogue, moderation, and constructive action seem closed. The general acceptance of extremism from both the left and the right has reached the point where even excessive violence is greeted with apathy.

"Politics" Today

2. The administration of General Carlos Arana Osorio, completing its first year this month, is pledged to the pacification of Guatemala. Arana's background as the army zone commander who cleared the guerrilla-terrorists from their long-time safe haven in the eastern hills earned him, along with a strong man reputation, the sobriquets of "Lion of Zacapa" among his admirers and "Butcher of Zacapa" among his detractors. His presidential campaign for the 1970 elections was based on the caudillo appeal and won him more than 40 percent of the valid vote, a plurality that beat two candidates politically to his left.

3. Arana, perhaps sensitive to his position as a minority president, immediately upon assuming office dedicated his term to improving the lot of the "marginal" Guatemalan through socioeconomic reform. He also promised to exercise restraint in the security field. His exaggerated efforts to erase the picture of Arana "the assassin," such as publishing poetry he had written to his daughter, produced a round of criticism, cruel jokes, and new epithets. Nevertheless, his

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seeming sincerity in wanting to turn the country around, to end political violence, and to help all his countrymen won him at least an open mind and a hearing from the legitimate opposition. Soon, however, Arana's own supporters convinced him of his own lack of political expertise and lobbied for a no-holds-barred counterterrorist campaign. The active insurgents, who had been thrown off balance by Arana's initial reformist rhetoric and insistence on legality in dealing with subversion, reverted to their position that a repressive government best serves their purposes and set out to invite repressive action. They resumed terrorist activity, concentrating on murdering easy targets such as minor police officials.

4. Continuing terrorism and the fear that the insurgents would attempt major violence on their 10th anniversary led the government on 13 November 1970 to impose a state of siege whose severity was unprecedented in Guatemala. This move signaled an assault on the subversives, using all resources and methods. The security forces and allied rightist terrorist squads have probably accounted for most of the 150 political deaths a month, but many of the violent incidents in Guatemala cannot be surely ascribed to any particular group.

5. Among the dead are about 15 high-level members of the major terrorist groups. Security operations have also resulted in the discovery of numerous safehouses and arms caches, and of documents useful for information on the insurgent organizations. [REDACTED] 25X1

[REDACTED] the terrorist groups have been seriously affected by the loss of personnel, security, and contacts, and that psychological damage has occurred, too. Distrust between and within the terrorist groups has mounted, and the insurgents have accounted for a much smaller portion of the violence this year. 25X1

6. Some of the victims of the security operations were targeted on the basis of their political opposition to the groups in power or because of their

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association with the revolutionary governments during 1944-54. A few had been very prominent in public life and were representative of the most articulate elements in society--a congressional deputy, a labor leader, and several university professors, radio commentators, and journalists. Dozens of students and others from the "intellectual community" are missing and presumed dead at the hands of army assassination squads. The assault on this very vocal segment has evoked bad publicity at home and abroad and spread a general sense of insecurity to those usually protected by name, connections, positions, or wealth.

7. Many of the mutilated bodies that have been discovered in rivers and ravines, along roads and in other places that have become standard disposal sites for corpses probably are miscellaneous "troublemakers." 25X1
For example, 25X1

army operations in the western department of San Marcos had eliminated 200 "insurgents and bandits" in the seven weeks since the state of siege had been imposed. The idea of by-passing the ineffective judicial system by eliminating habitual delinquents and criminals appears to have fairly widespread acceptance



Firemen Uncover Victims of the Violence

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as one of the more defensible aspects of the security campaign.

8. A few constructive government programs have taken shape, including a rural development program, the opening of credit to small farmers, and tentative progress has been made on a huge investment project (EXMIBAL) that will--if consummated--more than double the total level of investment in the country. Nevertheless, the major thrust of the government policy over the past year has been terrorism and violence. The state of siege prohibits political activity, and therefore only semiclandestine activity has occurred within and between partisan organizations. There are indications that even the politicians aligned with the government may be feeling the pinch of these restraints and that differences of opinion over continuing the emergency conditions may be drawing lines between the politicians and the military.

9. Among the legal opposition political groups, there is some behind-the-scenes effort to maintain identity and structure, but the restrictions of the state of siege, the inherent danger of being in the opposition camp, and loss of leadership have left these parties practically inert. Growing numbers see their political future as desperate and their personal lives threatened. Some privately express the belief that the only out is to cast their lot with that of the guerrillas, but such statements probably indicate despair rather than real intent.

Years of Tumult

10. Guatemalan strong-man General Jorge Ubico reiterated his philosophy of governing five days before his overthrow in 1944: "While I am President, I will not grant liberty of press nor of association because the people of Guatemala are not prepared for democracy and need a strong hand." Thirteen years of his personalistic and repressive regime had kept the country politically immature, economically backward and archaic in its social structure.

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Still, Guatemalans can now be heard to reflect fondly on the days of Ubico, when the country was safe and "orderly."

11. Ubico's overthrow on 1 July 1944 was not the result of internal upheaval, but of a revolt of young city dwellers--mainly students, teachers, writers, and other professionals and businessmen with few ties to the "traditional" society. Many of these young people were implementing ideas acquired in exile, and were hardly representative of the whole society. Leaders were so lacking that Juan Jose Arevalo, born in Guatemala, was brought back from a professional position in Argentina so that he could assume the presidency.

12. The performance of Arevalo and his successor, Arbenz, during the ten years they were in power was in sharp contrast with their promises, although some significant experimentation--especially in agrarian reform--did have a lasting impact. Revolutionary goals and classical democratic principles were set out moderately in the charter of government, but moderation was, in fact, rare. In its earliest days, the revolution provided government by the improvisation of inexperienced political romantics, and ideology soon lost out to expediency and opportunism. Power during both the Arevalo and Arbenz regimes centered in the presidency and an inner circle of professional politicians, intellectuals, and army officers who controlled or manipulated the other branches of government and the armed forces by patronage. Unrepresentative, unstable political parties were the regime's democratic props.

13. Supporters of the old order strenuously resisted the social and political upheaval. During Arevalo's term (1945-51) some 30 attempts were made to overthrow the government. The traditionalists' worst fears were given substance as the Communists, the only political element in the country with a program and strategy, became increasingly influential. Most of the present leaders of the Communist

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Party were active in the Arevalo government. Secretary general Bernardo Alvarado served in the Ministry of Economy; central committeeman and terrorist leader Huberto Alvarado was in the publicity office of the presidency; and central committeeman and guerrilla leader Carlos Rene Valle y Valle served in both the Education Ministry and the National Petroleum Institute.

14. Many observers expected Colonel Jacobo Arbenz, former defense minister and large landowner, to swing the presidency away from the radicalism of the Arevalo period. Instead, his term (1951-54) saw the entrenchment of the Communists, who played a dynamic and often decisive role in the government. Their enhanced influence greatly widened the gulf between the left and right, and harassment by both sides brought the country to the verge of class warfare.

15. Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas and his "army of liberation" overthrew Arbenz at midpoint in his constitutional term. With the bulk of the population either apathetic or ambivalent in the brief civil war of 18-27 June 1954, the balance of power rested with the army, whose leaders were unwilling to plunge the nation into a bloodbath to support a regime that they finally saw as Communist-dominated and bent on undermining the position of the armed forces. Even erstwhile supporters of Arbenz wavered when, in the face of the Castillo Armas threat, Arbenz was forced to adopt repressive measures even more ruthless than Ubico's police tactics.

16. The main concern of the Castillo Armas' administration was the elimination of Communism in the country. In general it represented a return toward the old-style social structure, but without the political rigidity of the prerevolutionary era. The distance between the government and the governed again was widened as the mass organizations of the revolution were dismantled.

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17. The assassination of Castillo Armas in 1957 left the country in political confusion. After two elections were inconclusive, in 1958 the congress finally selected General Miguel Ydigoras as president. Parties on the left and right scrambled for dominance during a five-year period of mushrooming corruption and inefficiency. Ydigoras was able to last out almost all of his term only because of his skill in dividing the opposition and playing off diverse groups against one another. Administrative chaos was matched by political turmoil, with some 30 presidential hopefuls maneuvering and haranguing. In addition, the Communists were able to recoup most of their earlier losses as Castillo Armas' anti-Communist legislation lapsed or was weakened, and by the pre-election period in 1963, the Party and front groups were operating with relative openness. The final straw was Arevalo's clandestine arrival in Guatemala amid speculation that Ydigoras was conniving in a proposed revolutionary comeback for the ex-president. Distrust of Ydigoras and disgust with the total national disorganization were nearly unanimous. Although Defense Minister Colonel Enrique Peralta had restrained advocates of a coup in the past, he led the military in the ouster of Ydigoras in late March 1963.

18. Ydigoras' continual juggling of political elements set the stage for the triumph of extremism, and the new military government provided a backdrop for the terrorist politics that by now have become standard. Although the military government itself was not markedly repressive, its lack of legitimacy provided incipient guerrilla groups with a raison d'etre. Armed rebels, led by dissident junior officers from the Guatemalan military, prodded the Communists away from polemical theorizing into active insurgency. The military regime had almost no success against the guerrillas, and they operated with relative impunity, particularly in the Sierra de las Minas in the departments of Izabal and Zacapa. Political and operational dissension within the guerrilla groups was the insurgents' primary problem.

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19. Since 1963, the raucous politics that characterized the Ydigoras period have been almost totally absent, the outstanding exception being the campaign for the 1970 elections. Full constitutional guarantees have been operative only sporadically over the past eight years as governments invoked various emergency conditions to cope with the subversive threat.

20. After many delays and much plotting, in 1966 the military government permitted elections. The victory of the major opposition party--the center left Revolutionary Party (PR)--over two strongly conservative parties was in large part political fantasy. To take and hold office, President Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro had to grant carte blanche to the armed forces in military affairs, particularly in the field of counterinsurgency. The army's frequently indiscriminate antiterrorist campaign left thousands dead and a battered but unbroken insurgent movement. In social and fiscal affairs, Mendez tread lightly, backing off from reforms that upset important vested interests. Nevertheless, his doing nothing government was in one respect unique in Guatemala: it survived its full four-year constitutional term and then handed over its authority to the duly elected opposition.

21. The first year of President Arana's term has been marked by an unrestrained campaign against the insurgents. The extension of security operations beyond terrorists to real or imagined collaborators, leftist intellectuals, and miscellaneous criminals and delinquents has affected a significant portion of that very narrow segment of Guatemalan society that participates in the national life. Antagonism between the politically operative forces--the parties, the army, and the insurgents, seems likely to intensify, and the prospect for a happy outcome is dim.

The State of the Insurgency

22. The fortunes of terrorist groups have fluctuated during the ten years they have operated in

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Guatemala. The current counterinsurgency effort has battered the subversives as severely as did the similar effort under President Mendez from late 1966 to early 1968. Stung by domestic and international criticism of the bloodletting at that time, Mendez all but canceled security operations, and the lull that ensued until Arana took office last July gave the insurgents time to reorganize and implement lessons learned about their own vulnerabilities. When Arana strengthened security measures, the insurgent movement was a harder nut to crack, but the government has nevertheless put the insurgents on the defensive over the past few months.

23. The insurgents unable to establish organizational unity or common goals, have been their own worst enemies. Their movement began during a rebellion of the armed forces in 1960, but nationalism was soon sullied by intrusions of the Soviet-oriented Communist party, Mexican-based Trotskyists, and Cuban-sponsored guerrillas. As a result, organization, numbers, alliances, and rivalries have continually shifted over the years. At any given time, including the present, there are reports of new dissension and policy disagreement. Currently, as during most of the time since 1966, there are two major insurgent groups, the Communist party (PGT) and the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR).

24. The FAR, long and actively supported from Havana, is a group whose only aim is to destroy existing social, political, and economic structures by violent methods. It has no set political program, and its leaders show no original or imaginative revolutionary thought. The operations of FAR, although not without sophistication, fall far short of the campaign expertise of the Tupamaros in Uruguay. FAR members are mainly young people with a simplistic view of world affairs. They are fanatic in their hatred of both their own government and the US Government, which they hold responsible ideologically and materially for all they see wrong with Guatemala.

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25. The Communist Party (PGT) includes some young fanatics, but on the whole it is less narrow in its view and approach than the FAR. The leaders of the PGT, who were witnesses to and participants in the revolutionary governments of the 1940s and 1950s, survived the counterrevolution and are known and respected throughout the Communist world. The party accepts and uses violence as a revolutionary method, but not as its only or even its most important method. Its broad strategy still calls for long-term preparation of the masses to form the basis necessary for a full-scale effort against the entrenched, feudalistic system. The party, moreover, has a plan--albeit perhaps a vague one--for governing; it has tasted power once, and would have some capability for governing again if it had the chance.

26. The history of the PGT and the prominence of some of its leaders add both to the party's vulnerability and to its strength. On the one hand, the visibility of the leaders and supposed collaborators (especially those who were members of the revolutionary bureaucracy under Arevalo and Arbenz) makes them easy targets. On the other hand, the important connections that many of the most capable leaders of the party enjoy provide them a fairly reliable margin of safety. During the harshest period of the Arana crackdown, a central committee member who was also the leader of the PGT terrorist arm was arrested and then released, reportedly through a bribe, but probably at least as much because of the merits of his connections.

27. Both the FAR and the PGT have taken serious losses since the Arana government established the state of siege. Several military operations against safe houses netted large numbers of documents, propaganda materials and arms, and led to subsequent arrests of insurgents.

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Both groups have engaged in some self criticism, blaming poor security and lack of discipline for some of their losses. In addition, distrust between the two groups has mounted. The FAR is particularly suspicious of the PGT, which FAR

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leaders believe has bought some protection by providing the government with information on the FAR. The PGT, with about 40 leadership positions, had lost at least five leaders by June 1971 and the FAR, with perhaps 30 chieftains, had lost about eight.

28. The terrorists have not abandoned all activity, but evidently they have accounted for only a small portion of the violence in Guatemala over the past several months. Both the PGT and FAR have vacillated on plans for a spectacular act designed to retaliate for their losses and to symbolize a continuing ability to strike the government at will. The leadership is apparently unwilling to take chances and incur further risks. The time seems ripe, nevertheless, for one of the groups to attempt some important action. In the past, the terrorists' most notorious and daring acts, including the murders in 1968 of the US ambassador and two US officers in the military mission have occurred when the insurgents were feeling the pinch of security operations.

29. Although the damage inflicted on both terrorist groups by the government is severe, it is probably far from mortal.

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The PGT, especially, remains busy on political projects discussing recruitment goals and experimenting with methods of broadening its popular base. Captured FAR documents include recent studies of the strengths and weaknesses of individual members, analyses of the government's campaign, and projections of revolutionary progress.

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30. The insurgents may now have access to increased outside aid. Cuba has been assisting the FAR and might be disposed to boost support for the long-favored Guatemalan revolutionaries. The PGT receives financial support from the Soviets through a communications network in Mexico. The PGT is also helped by journalistic support from its exile community in Mexico, a group that is currently planning

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wider and more sensational publicity for the PGT cause. In addition, sporadic and often unconfirmed reports indicate continuing efforts by former terrorist leaders who left or were ousted from the movement to regroup and open new guerrilla fronts in Guatemala.

Counterinsurgency, Arana-style

31. President Arana has firmly and frequently committed himself to a contained and professional action against the insurgents. Nevertheless, his "pacification campaign" closely resembles the type of counterinsurgency that Guatemala first witnessed in Zacapa in 1966-68 when then-colonel Arana was brigade commander. Public reaction has been mixed. His critics regard him as a man wedded to the brutal suppression not only of "guerrillas" but of all leftist opponents; others see him as a traditional strong man untrained in the art of governing and dominated by fanatical right-wing supporters; his associates and supporters view him as a new "liberator" from the Communist menace.



General Arana
President of Guatemala

32. Arana has made some effort to project himself as a leader above partisan goals, as more open-minded and perhaps more "decent" than his closest associates. In fact, however, he seems most comfortable following the advice of his hard-line advisers, such as minister of government Jorge Arenales and president of the congress Mario Sandoval. These men, who advocate a "decisive blow" against the subversives, make no secret of their inclusion under the terrorist label of university professors and other leftist intellectuals whom they consider "mentors" of subversion.

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33. The President seems to have settled for a combination of policies that satisfy his commitment to law and order as well as to the "marginal Guatemalan." To carry out his counterinsurgency campaign, he is using the extreme right, which has consistently viewed pacification as a crusade against the Communists and as revenge for the deaths and persecution of its own party faithful at the hands of the far leftists. The counterinsurgency campaign shows little or no discrimination among shades of extremism and counts as equally favorable the assassinations of FAR leaders and of legal opposition leaders, whom they consider on the insurgents' side. Meanwhile, the government has moved forward on social reform projects. By his frequent tours into the rural areas, President Arana has made his government visible in regions never before traveled by a chief executive.

34. Violence may have reached unprecedented heights since the imposition of the state of siege mainly because of the government's clandestine assassination squads. The level of violence at any given time is apparent rather than precise because bodies are often found weeks or months after death. The proportion of true "subversives" among the dead varies substantially from area to area, as considerable leeway is accorded the leaders of the security operations. Zone commanders in the hinterland, for example, act with a high degree of autonomy. A new variable was added in the government's recent authorization of special security arrangements for the large plantation owners. The US defense attaché learned in May from large landholders in San Marcos and Retalhuleu that the government unofficially permitted them to arm their trusted employees and to set up a radio security net. Similar cooperation apparently has been achieved on the south coast of Escuintla, where finca owners have recruited recently discharged soldiers and followers of rightist strong-man congressman Oliverio Casteneda to serve as armed security personnel.

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Parties in Disarray

35. The most prominent politician in Guatemala today is Mario Sandoval, leader of the rightist coalition that brought Arana to power. His own National Liberation Movement (MLN) overshadows its ally the Institutional Democratic Party (PID), a makeshift group assembled by the military government in the mid-1960s. Sandoval's roughshod treatment of the PID has done little to ease natural strains between the two coalition parties. Sandoval, who served as Castillo Armas' personal secretary, is a ruthlessly militant rightist, who has discouraged any activity that might enlarge the MLN's image to more than a professional anti-Communist group. As a result, his leadership has reinforced the MLN stereotype and left the party very narrowly based. There is some evidence of internal division over Sandoval's personalist rule. The lack of second-echelon leaders and the realization that they are high on the insurgents' target lists lead MLN leaders to adopt a grim view of the future. They see only two possibilities: continuation in power or death.

36. The opposition parties, considerably more constrained than the coalition under the state of siege, have had to operate semiclandestinely. The largest opposition party, the centrist Revolutionary Party (PR), is suffering a leadership crisis. Two abortive attempts to elect party officials have divided the party between old guard and young liberal elements. Long-time PR stalwart Carlos Sagastume Perez is head of a rightist wing that may be considering alliance with an Aranista political grouping. The PR's most active and aggressive leader, former foreign minister Alberto Fuentes Mohr, went into voluntary exile in fear of his life after the Arana government had imprisoned him at the time the state of siege was established. Fuentes' rhetoric about the need for a move to the left frightened moderates in his own party, and in the eyes of the right he became a symbol of leftist extremism. His departure from Guatemala probably weakened his political position substantially, but perhaps only temporarily, as the

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counterinsurgent campaign is helping consolidate Fuentes' position within the liberal faction of the PR. Fuentes himself has reportedly been plotting against the government and attempting to form a leftist political group. The leader of the PR deputies in congress recently indicated to US officials that they believe the legitimate political opposition is being forced against the wall by the government's indiscriminate murder of innocent victims.

37. Although the MLN can for the most part live with the PR--unless and until it "goes left" with Fuentes Mohr--the democratic left is beyond the pale of acceptability. In addition to an amorphous element of "Arevalists" dating from the old revolutionary days, Guatemalans generally consider the democratic left to include two political groups: the legally registered Guatemala Christian Democracy (DCG) and a less formal grouping, the Democratic Revolutionary Unity (URD). The left in Guatemala is a highly elitist group of proud intellectuals whose superiority in oratory, populism, and publicity gambits feeds the obsessive fears on the right that the left is stronger than it appears and that the "democratic" left is thoroughly infiltrated by Communists. The DCG and URD drew 20 percent of the vote in the 1970 elections. Their key stronghold is Guatemala City, where they captured the mayoralty and where they now control the municipal government.

38. The democratic left at first was sympathetic to the difficulties the Arana government faced in dealing with the security problem and was happy with Arana's social development program. But after the shooting of two prominent intellectuals associated with the PGT in November 1970, DCG and URD leaders became worried. Heightened Communist terrorism in December, including the murders of an MLN congressman and a controversial labor leader, gave rise to rumors that the government would retaliate. When the security forces assassinated the sole URD congressman and the country's major peasant leader the leaders of the democratic left were fully convinced that the Arana government had opened a campaign to eliminate

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all left-of-center political opposition. The DCG leadership made representations to the US Embassy, urging the US Government to exert its influence to change Arana's policies. The DCG secretary general and the URD mayor of Guatemala City temporarily left the country, believing themselves next on the government's assassination list.

39. Guatemala City Mayor Colom Argueta claims that he is deeply troubled about Arana's alleged fits of rage. Colom believes that all key figures on the left are potential targets should something provoke the president at a given time. The kidnaping and murder last month of Colom's half-brother is interpreted by the mayor as an attack upon himself. Adding to the fears among the left are repeated public references by Arana associates to alignments between the opposition parties and the subversives. For example, at the opening of the second year of congress early this month, Congressional president Sandoval spoke of the decadent role of the Catholic Church and of the dangerous openings Christian Democracy was providing to subversives.

The Military

40. Traditionally, the armed forces have been the most important political force in Guatemala. Since the military assumption of government in 1963, they have broadened their position in society and consolidated their bases of control. The officer corps forms a small but powerful clique within the national society that normally has little chance to mix with civilians let alone to build real friendships in the civilian sector.

the natural propensity for cohesion in the military has developed to a remarkable extreme in Guatemala. even the young officers who became guerrillas retained personal and informal relations with some of their former colleagues. The corporate nature of the military is reinforced by the fact that future officers are brought into the military polytechnic academy after grammar school and receive

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their five years' training during adolescence. Although General Ubico, overthrown in 1944, was the last of the dictators in Guatemala, military men have held the highest political office for most of the time from 1944 to present.

41. The ever-present threat of military intervention is a strong inhibitor that intimidates the professional politicians. The parties on the democratic left believe, probably correctly, that the armed forces would not permit them to take power. When President Mendez assumed the presidency in 1966 the officer corps was deeply concerned and forced him to abdicate his power in particular areas. As a career military man, President Arana is highly acceptable to the armed forces and probably will enjoy their continued support. The fact that Arana must also deal with his civilian party supporters nevertheless opens the possibility of eventual conflicts of interest with the officer corps.

42. The existence of a leftist group within the officer corps is occasionally suggested by observers of and participants in Guatemalan politics. In projections of a possible Peruvian-style coup, two officers consistently enter the scenario: the chief of the school of advanced military studies, Colonel Ricardo Peralta Mendez, and the head of the military academy, Colonel Jose Rios Montt. No hard information confirms the existence of a "Nasirist" clique in the services, but the prevalence of the notion may indicate some basis in fact. Mayor Colom Argueta recently claimed that "many" military officers were unhappy with Arana's pacification effort, which they considered more political than antiguerrilla.

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43. On the basis of data available, however, the armed forces seem unlikely to step leftward in the foreseeable future. It is the armed forces that have been used as principal executioners of guerrillas,

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troublemakers, and even those with whom the "legitimate left" identifies. A retaliatory purge would inevitably accompany a political turnaround, and at present military institutional unity is an overwhelming barrier to such a development. If, however, civil strife continues much longer, revolt by some portion of the armed forces is a possibility.

Outlook

44. The extreme violence with which Guatemalans have lived in the past decade has both polarized and brutalized the society. The public tolerance for lawlessness and violence is evident in the general apathy with which more than a hundred politically motivated assassinations were greeted in May 1971. Violence seems to become significant in the eyes of the public only when persons of prominence are victims. Some of the quiet that passes for apathy, however, is fear, as guilt by association with either side is often fatal.

45. The institutional progress implicit in Arana's constitutional succession with no break in the legal process probably is more illusory than real. The possibility of a free election in which the legal opposition could expect to enjoy the fruits of victory seems no greater now than in 1963. The legal method by which Arana became president loses some of its ostensible significance in light of the probability that no other party would have been permitted a peaceful take-over of office.

46. Guatemala's political parties, especially the democratic left and the MLN, have a paranoid view of their own situations. Those in the MLN who have lived in fear of a terrorist attack for over a decade believe that the leaders of the legitimate left have abetted the insurgents. They also believe that the Guatemalan electorate will support the opposition in 1974, and that the leftists will completely destroy their personal security. The left views the MLN in equally simplistic terms. They see its members as

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killers who have already eliminated one of their leaders and who threaten the others. The progressive hardening of stereotypes seems to have removed all chance for the kind of accommodation that finally contained similar political fratricide in Colombia. Nor does Guatemala have the visible national leader commanding respect and trust beyond his own partisans that Colombia could turn to.

47. The most likely prospect is that the right will entrench its position in the form either of an extended term for President Arana or, should the military again see the civilian politicians as intolerably disruptive to the national life, of a successor military government. As the leftist list of grievances against the incumbent government grows, it is increasingly unlikely that those in power now would risk the accession of the leftists to power.

48. The society has become inured to a high level of violence, but how long Guatemalans can accept political fratricide remains a question. Polarization continues, and growing desperation on the part of the democratic left is suggested by its offers of collaboration with the Communists, in spite of all the dangers of such an association. The most respected daily newspaper in Guatemala on 30 September 1970 described the narrowness of the views of all segments of society: "In Guatemala each sees violence from his own perspective. Students protest over violence against students, officials over the death of their agents, and even we the press complain with special intensity over attacks on our own colleagues. This is not a new phenomenon. Blood begets blood, hate brings vengeance, and these ingredients are poisoning the soul of our nation, perhaps irreparably."

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